



# Oakmont Park

## **WORKSHOP #1 MEETING REPORT November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2001**

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*Workshop time: 7:00 to 9:00pm*

*Workshop location: Monroe Middle School cafeteria, 2800 Bailey Lane, Eugene*

*Workshop facilitator: Robin Hostick*

*Other elected officials and City staff present:*

*Councilor David Kelly, Johnny Medlin, Andrea Riner, Emily Proudfoot*

### **BACKGROUND**

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City of Eugene Parks Planning staff hosted the first of two or three neighborhood workshops to discuss upcoming improvements to Oakmont Park. Improvements to the park are funded by the Parks and Open Space bond measure passed in 1998 by area residents. The workshop included a brief presentation on the project, the process, and the context of the park. This was followed by a general, informal discussion of issues and ideas relating to park improvements. Goals for the evening included 1) providing information to the neighborhood, and; 2) gathering ideas for a new park development plan. About 25 neighbors and interested parties (excluding staff and elected officials) attended the workshop.

### **ADVERTISEMENT**

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Advertisement for workshop #1 included the following:

- A postcard invitation was mailed on October 26<sup>th</sup> (12 days prior to the workshop) to 800 Willakenzie-area residents and businesses within approximately 1/2 mile of the park
- Personal postcard invitations were mailed to around 50 other interested parties and stakeholders, including neighborhood leaders
- An article on the event was included in the November 1 issue of the Council Newsletter
- A news release was distributed on November 2nd
- The workshop was included on the City Manager's Office public meetings calendar
- The workshop was included on the Parks and Open Space online schedule of events
- The workshop was announced in the City/Region section of the Register Guard preceding the event

## **PRESENTATION**

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Meeting participants convened at the Monroe Middle School cafeteria. A brief introduction was given to the Parks and Open Space Plan and the role of Parks Planning in the development of POS projects over the next few years. Reference was made to other acquisitions and projects in or near the Willakenzie area. Major outcomes for the meeting were listed as 1) the sharing of information about the project with neighbors; and 2) generating neighborhood-specific ideas for park improvements.

The planning process was outlined briefly, including the potential for a conditional use permit, and it was explained that there will be more opportunities for public comment in the future. The schedule was given for park construction in the spring and summer of 2003. The existing park site was reviewed in detail, including a description of major elements such as circulation, existing trees, etc. In general, it was explained that the site offers very few constraints because it is open, free of trees, utilities, topography, wetlands, etc. Major influences on the park include the Oakway Center shopping area to the south, the Eugene Montessori School near the southwest corner of the park, and the adjacent neighborhoods.

## **DISCUSSION**

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With a group of about 25 neighbors, a productive discussion was held around issues and ideas for the park. All participants had an opportunity to share ideas and comments. Participants were asked to list issues, concerns, ideas, preferences, etc. for improvements to the park. A list is provided following this summary for a more detailed report of participant comments.

The participant group seemed mostly unified behind the idea that the park design should reflect mostly passive recreation values. Active recreation such as ball fields, off-leash dog parks and skateparks were clearly not preferred by most participants, although a few participants suggested smaller active recreation facilities such as skateboarding elements and a basketball court. Preferred uses for the park included walking, dog-walking, children's play, picnicking, nature enjoyment, relaxation, informal active recreation such as frisbee, pickup ball games, kite flying, etc.

There appeared to be rumors among the neighborhood that the City plans to construct a street connection through the middle of the park between Bedford Way and Frontier Drive. Participants were assured that this was not in the interest of the park, and that the City would not be pursuing such a development. The general concept of a neighborhood park was discussed further, in contrast to a community park and a metropolitan park.

Participants provided a diversity of ideas around creating a picnic area and children's playground that includes a water feature, trees, natural stone, interactive art and park furniture such as benches and picnic tables. There appeared to be some agreement around the suggestion that low-level lights such as bollard lighting or lighting on a water feature would be acceptable in this area, although lighting in general was not desired. Participants mostly preferred not to include a shelter since it was seen as an attraction for long-term homeless use. Around the issue of

negative use patterns, it was explained that the neighborhood can be an important, positive influence in the park by using it, activating it with their presence, as well as supporting facilities and programming activities that encourage positive uses. Also, it was mentioned that good design - CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) - can make a big difference in how a park is used, and how safe it feels.

There seemed to be general concurrence around the idea of providing native trees and shrubs in the park. Local trends are leaning towards a blend of parklands and natural areas, particularly with restoration efforts for endangered oak savanna habitat. Participants appeared to support this idea as long as adequate open space was reserved in the park for informal play activities. This could also address a general desire from adjacent neighbors for some sort of screening from the main park to help maintain a sense of privacy.

There was some preference for having no hard surface paths in the park. It was explained that, for higher use areas and for critical pedestrian/bike connections, it is important to use hard surface paths for reasons of durability, but more importantly for compliance with the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act). Also to comply with ADA, it was explained that the City currently prefers to use engineered wood fibers as a playground surfacing. There was also strong support for a safe crosswalk across Oakmont Way for children and park visitors crossing back and forth from the Oakway Center shopping area. It was explained that this is an issue that parks staff can take up with Public Works Transportation, but is for the most part outside the scope of park improvements.

A variety of ideas and insights were shared for how best to carry out the park design. Among these ideas, participants mentioned looking at the history of the site, preserving significant views, employing principles of Feng Shui (a Chinese philosophy of harmonious design), as well as creating a theme for the park.

The following is a general list of comments and ideas presented by participants during the workshop.

## ISSUES

### *Facilities/Design*

- No **programmed ballfields** (concerns about parking, impacts, cost, resources)
- No **road** through park (rumors suggested possibility)
- No **lights** in park (concerns about light pollution, spill-over into yards, homes - perhaps consider **bollard lighting OK** in center of park near picnic area/playground)
- No **restrooms**
- Use **native plants** - low-maintenance, environmentally friendly
- What **wildlife** is present in park? How could park attract more?

### *Circulation*

- Fast traffic on Oakmont Way - **dangerous** crossing for children
- **Poor connection** to park from neighborhoods to north

### *Use Patterns*

- Park should be a **calm** place, with trees (consider as a contrast to the busy mall)
- Park should be **multi-generational** - provide something for all ages
- Montessori **kids currently play** in the park - would benefit from improvements
- There are over **1000 people** working at **Oakway Center** - they would benefit from a picnic area (maybe not covered) - also morning and evening use
- Keep **views open** from the school into the park (school needs line of sight)
- What are the **demographics** of the area? Families with children?
- Think **long-term** when considering demographics (families/children come and go)
- **Dog walkers** need a place to go (not an off-leash area - not appropriate for park)
- **Overnight use** of park by homeless can be a problem (often in vehicles parked nearby)
- Concerned about **homeless use** of picnic facilities (especially if shelter is built - consider that Alton Baker Park is nearby for large picnic events that need a shelter)
- There are problems with large, commercial **semi-trucks and vans** parking for long periods along park - find a way to discourage this to keep park visible and free for park users

## IDEAS

### *Facilities/Design*

- Provide large, **unprogrammed open space** (for informal sports, activities)
- Provide a **children's playground**
  - Locate in the south end of park, not too near the school or the street
  - Provide stones in the playground (large, smooth, natural stones)
  - Provide space and/or barrier between playground and Oakmont Way
- Locate a **picnic area** by Oakmont Way (closest to shopping center - away from neighbors)
  - Provide a barbecue near picnic area, include a concrete pad and electrical outlet for events or family gatherings
- Provide **walking trails** and open area for dog owners (on-leash only)
- Provide **trees** - important for shade for families, picnicking
- Provide a **water feature** (fountain - with lights? Use natural materials - should look good in winter when not in use)
- Provide **natural areas** (ex: oak savanna or savanna prairie restoration)
  - Provide Oregon white oaks and native wildflowers in park
  - Keep an open area for recreation with native plants, flowers, etc. to the sides
  - Provide buffer between main park and edges
- Provide **functional art** such as playground elements, benches, etc.
  - Use artistry in standard park features
  - Consider interactive art, abstract art, natural art
- Provide **soft surface** paths (minimum or no paving)
- Provide a **drinking fountain**
- Provide skate features (conflict w/calm?)
- Provide a basketball court (conflict w/calm? Problems w/vandalism?)
- Provide portable toilet pad?
- Provide a running track (if soft surface, inconspicuous - balance w/nature)

### *Use*

- Provide **signs!** Rules signs to discourage camping, park signs, interpretive signs

#### *Circulation*

- Create a **connection** to the north? Consider 10' easement. Long-term goal
- Provide “bump-out” curb extension to create a **safe crossing** between Oakway Center and park
- Provide **daffodils** along Oakmont Way (for color, park definition in springtime)

#### *General*

- Create a **theme** for the park - something related to cultural or natural history?
- Consider having the Montessori kids **participate** in art for the park
- Consider employing principles of **Feng Shui** in park design
- Consider significant **views** in design (i.e. view south to Spencer Butte and for fireworks)
- Employ principles of **CPTED** (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design)
- Like Emerald Park as a **model**, also Tandy Turn, Bond Lane
- Use **native stone** in park
- Consider **history** of site, natural resources

## **FINDINGS**

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Based on feedback from workshop participants, a mix of passive and low-key active recreation appears to be appropriate for the park, including a large, informal field for unprogrammed recreation, bordered by areas of habitat restoration. A picnic area combined with a children's play ground, possibly including a water feature and interactive art, should be developed in the southern portion of the park closer to Oakmont Way. The central and northern portion of the park should be left open for the informal field and habitat restoration. Trees should be used for shade in and around the picnic area, and for buffering and habitat restoration around the edges of the park. Accessible pedestrian and bicycle circulation routes should be included from neighborhood entry points at Bedford Way and Frontier Drive connecting to Oakmont Way and the Oakway Center shopping area. Soft-surface walking or jogging paths should be included around the informal field or connecting other areas of the park.

## **CLOSING**

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Participants were reminded that there will be at least one more public meeting for Oakmont Park sometime in early 2002, and were encouraged to watch the City/Region section of the newspaper as well as their mailbox for invitations to this event. It was explained that, at the next workshop, participants will be able to respond to a park design that will be developed based upon discussions and priorities from today's event. Participants or other interested parties are welcome to discuss the project or submit comments at any time via phone, email or delivered mail.

## **ATTENDEES:**

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The following parties attended the workshop:

Denise Grieve

Liz Sake

Debbie Rauch

Joyce Ostering  
Pat Kendall  
Linda Cropp  
Marie DeZeeuw  
Gloreen Lawrence

Devan & Deanne Barger  
Rosemary Miranda  
Anna Romig  
Charles Biggs  
Trudy Biondo  
Steve Karth  
Michelle Cahill

Roger R. Haxby  
Jeff Rear  
Arain & Erin Coutur  
Irene & Paul Bonney  
Mike Bothman  
Matt Scheibe  
Sheri Greatwood

## **COMMENTS SHEETS**

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The following comments were recorded on comment sheets provided at the workshop and turned in to City staff at the end of the event.

Total comment sheets handed in at meeting: 6

Total comment sheets handed in following the meeting: 0

1. In what ways do you think Oakmont Park can benefit you, your neighborhood, or your community?
  - Connection between Frontier Drive and Bedford Way and street to the north would be a nice neighborhood/community benefit; Personal (neighborhood & community) benefit from open space w/lawn, trees, shrubs, place to sit, play
  - Decrease noise levels by increasing knolls, trees, etc.; increase property values by adding beauty
  - Nice open space for messing around; I have a two-year-old, he would love a pile of dirt; I like the idea of a neighborhood walking park; people can drive to Alton Baker Park if they want to take things
  - As a multi-generational park
  - I love the park as a field; I hope it isn't changed
2. What do you feel are some of the most important issues facing the park?
  - Make it welcoming for the neighborhood, and not too disruptive for the neighbors
  - Not adding features that would increase traffic and parking
  - Multi-use w/Montessori - open space, wild; more plants, trees; no lights - it's nice to see stars and mist above the ground; wild grass is great!
  - We do not want a park that will create more traffic, parking or big crowds from outside of the neighborhood; safety issues - set play area back from street; [keep] open feeling, clear sight lines
  - I don't want to see a lot of traffic using Oakmont Way due to the park. I would like to see the park be a very calm one. A tranquil place to go.
  - I don't want it over-developed; no "lawn"

3. What existing features or aspects of the park site do you like most, or feel should be preserved?
  - Connection (bikes/peds) between Frontier Drive and Bedford and those streets and Oakmont Way
  - Keep it child-free, most attractive to adults - keep noise levels down; no thru street!! (thru the middle of the park); no lighting; too much light pollution now
  - I like the wide open space to ride 2-yr.-old - rough bike, look at plants and bugs, etc.
  - Natural areas; quiet; connections - paths between access points
  - Openness of the park
  - The "field in the city" feel of it
4. What do you think needs to be improved or changed most?
  - Development rather than bare land - plants, trees, flowering shrubs, flowers (lots)
  - Noise - trees/ shrubs around edges
  - Nothing; trees and some shrubs; garbage can; poop baggy dispenser so I'm not 3 of 5 who picks it up; I'd love to help
  - Trash & dog waste being picked up more often; trees; open play space; paths
5. What are some of the activities and/or facilities you would like to see happen in the park? (Please refer to the attached general list of activities and facilities, but feel free to add items that are not on the list)
  - Votes in our family: skatepark or path (5); basketball court (3); bathroom, benches, tables (4); climbing structure (3); teeter totter (1); tennis court (1); swings (1); fields - baseball, soccer; lawn for hanging out on, picnics, etc.
  - No "programmed" fields
  - If anything, small play area; no lights to discourage late night visitors; calm space
  - Small play structures; grass area; community; play structures - swings, slides and a few climbing areas (abstract art?); basketball!! W/big and small hoops; community garden
  - I would like to see trees around the park.
6. What other considerations are important for the success of this park?
  - Separation of open space for younger and older users; dog owners & non-dog owners; users & neighbors
  - What are the demographics? Put playgrounds closer to the areas that have more kids, i.e. Frontier side
  - Quiet space, low lights or no lights; low paving; no restrooms; maybe a fountain
  - Flow; continuity; connectivity (w/neighborhood, w/nature); abstraction; character
  - I would like to see a pond and fountain that would make it a different kind of park
7. Any other comments?

- Thanks for having this workshop
- No “portapotties” - eyesore and smell; No extra paving - incl. basketball courts
- I don't know about picnic tables, they always bring in garbage, too; but I would probably use it too
- No ballparks!!!!; no sand under play structure; climbing trees; benches along paths are nice to sit and watch the park happen
- No lights!